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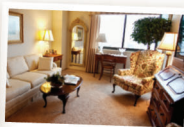
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Volume 16, Issue 412 • March 10-23, 2011

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Lavender Media Inc.

3715 Chicago Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55407

LavenderYellowPages.com

612-436-4660 office

877-515-9969 toll free

612-436-4685 fax

612-436-4664 subscriptions

612-436-4660 distribution

612-436-4698 advertising



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Readings with the Red Queen



A friend mentioned recently that a certain establishment (not in this area) was not interested in attracting clients who pursued what it termed an “alternative lifestyle.” Once my first rush of annoyance had abated (I won’t say “worn off”—it hasn’t), I kept turning the phrase over in my mind.

“Alternative lifestyle” both has amused and bemused me ever since it began cropping up in conversation and the media—a conveniently anodyne phrase for the bigoted to label people they wish to denigrate.

“Alternative” is shorthand for “not ours,” while “lifestyle” implies not only *choice*, but also, in conjunction with “alternative,” the deliberate choice of an unhealthy, abnormal way of life. *Not-us, wrong*, and *freely-chosen* are carefully crafted subtexts, repeated ad nauseam until “alternative lifestyle” has become common parlance.

Being gay is not a choice, despite assertions to the contrary, while a *lifestyle* is. Gays who time-share in the Bahamas are living a certain lifestyle—as are many straights—but not one linked to sexuality. Homelessness is not a lifestyle. Locavore and bareback circus rider are.

“Alternate lifestyle” is a description, not a moral judgment on an innate sexual orientation. Any “alternative lifestyle” is *abnormal*, but

only in that it is chosen and beyond ordinary.

Without knowing the photographer’s identity, I’d admired for years certain haunting underwater images in *National Geographic*. Only last July, following his untimely death, did I learn the photographer’s name was Wes Skiles, a freelancer. For 27 years, with a panoply of underwater gear, he had explored uncharted blue pools and stalagmite caves, bringing their mystery and beauty to the land-bound reader. His was an “alternative lifestyle,” brilliantly and exuberantly lived.

Philosopher Martin Heidegger wrote, “Language is the house of being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home.”

But when guardians become dictators, words are wielded to harm, exclude, and demean. The most benign words and phrases (“alternative lifestyle”) are co-opted, and turned to assert one group’s claim of moral superiority over others. “Alternative lifestyle” is just one of many building blocks so employed. Keep an eye out—see how they’re used, and by whom.

Your assignment, should you accept it: Deconstruct the catchphrase “family values,” and determine exactly how yet-another positive, anodyne phrase has been manipulated into an instrument of superiority (for the wielders) and prejudice (against you). **E.B. BOATNER**

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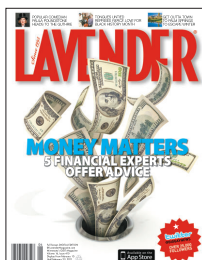
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LETTERS



What About Low-Income Folks?

Thank you for tackling the hot-button issue of finances in the article "Money Matters: 5 Financial Experts Offer Advice" [Lavender, Feb. 10]. I respect the opinions of the expert panel, but I believe they completely missed the boat on the main financial concerns facing the GLBT community.

As a social work student, I work with individuals more focused on rent and utilities than 401Ks and estates. Despite its importance, the majority of the community doesn't have the luxury to focus on long-range financial planning, because more of us than we would like to admit live at or near the poverty line.

I wish the panel had given perspectives relevant to low-income earners on how to balance short-term financial needs with long-term planning. The discussion of finances should be broadened to include people from all ends of the economic spectrum.

I believe that it is the GLBT community's responsibility to address the financial and social needs of our most vulnerable members. This is especially important in the current political climate focused on cuts to services, health care, and aid to the needy.

The GLBT community can take the lead by having a frank dialogue about how money management should be a priority, especially for those who live from paycheck to paycheck. Honestly, these are the people for whom money matters the most!

WILLIAM SCHWARTZ
EDINA, MN

Editor's Note: According to the International Demographics Media Audit, the Mean Income of Lavender readers is \$89,996, while their Mean Home Value is \$315,123.

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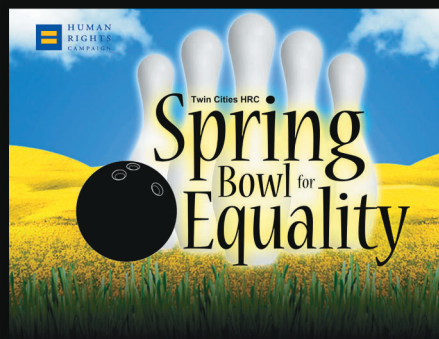
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Susan Cogger. Photo Courtesy of PFund Foundation

Cogger Leaves PFund To Pursue New Adventures



AT THE end of February, PFund Foundation Director of Development and Communications Susan Cogger left the organization for new adventures. She had served in the position four years, plus another five as a board member and volunteer. During her tenure, she more than doubled individual donations to PFund and secured its first corporate sponsorships.




Le Cirque Rouge performers with Loring Theater and RECLAIM staff. Photo by Sophia Hantzes

Le Cirque Rouge Presents Benefit Show for RECLAIM



ON FEBRUARY 11-12, Le Cirque Rouge Cabaret & Burlesque Show presented *I Love You* at the Loring Theater in Minneapolis. The performances were a benefit for RECLAIM, a clinic in South Minneapolis that aims to increase access to mental health support so LGBT youth may reclaim their lives from oppression in all its forms.



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Reported Police Calls at Saloon Increase 36.47 Percent in 2010 Compared to 2009

The Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) recently released statistics regarding the Saloon Bar at 830 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis.

According to MPD records, for the period January 1 through December 31, 2009, a total of 85 police calls at the Saloon were reported.

For the period January 1 through December 31, 2010, a total of 116 police calls at the Saloon were reported.

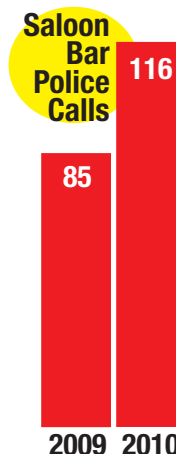
Thus, reported police calls at the Saloon increased 36.47 percent in 2010 compared to 2009.

Police calls for the period January 1 through December 31, 2010, included the following*:

- 14 "Fight"
- 14 "Unwanted Person"
- 12 "Disturbance"
- 11 "Assault in Progress"
- 8 "Customer Trouble"

- 6 "Down Outside-One"
- 6 "Suspicious Person"
- 5 "Check the Welfare"
- 3 "Assault Report Only"
- 3 "Attempt Pick-Up"
- 3 "Drunk/Intoxicated Person"
- 3 "Narcotics (Drug) Activity"
- 3 "Theft"
- 3 "Threats"
- 2 "Domestic Abuse in Progress"
- 2 "Unknown Trouble"
- 1 "Domestic"
- 1 "Down Outside-One w/ Fire"
- 1 "Emotionally Disturb Person"
- 1 "Forgery in Progress"
- 1 "Indecent Exposure"
- 1 "Person with a Weapon"
- 1 "Robbery of Person"
- 1 "Suspicious Vehicle"
- 1 "Theft-Report Only"

*The items in quotation marks are the exact wording from MPD records. **GEORGE HOLDGRAFER**



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DECORAH, IOWA, WELCOMES SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

Three Couples Discuss Their Wedding Experiences



Photo by Victoria Di Yin

David Stahl recalls, “It seemed almost too good to be true,” describing the “beautiful little town” of Decorah, Iowa, and the “extremely friendly and welcoming” reception he and his partner, Hans Venable, received when they went there to wed last June.

Stahl went on to explain, “Hans and I had had a wedding ceremony July 2, 1983. At that time, of course, there was no such thing as same-sex marriage in the United States, but Hans and I knew we would be together for the rest of our lives. We both came from families where healthy marriages were modeled for us by our parents, and we wanted the same thing.

“Jump ahead 27 years. We heard of the historic decision by the State of Iowa to legalize same-sex marriage, and we felt a strong desire to get a marriage license there. Maybe it was the courage of a state from the heartland of America that helped us to choose. We live in Texas, where same-sex marriage is not recognized.”

Because the two already were planning a road trip with their niece, Joanna Satterfield,

and her two children, as Stahl relates, “We included our marriage ceremony in Iowa as part of that vacation. We Googled the website <welcomeindecorah.com>, and liked what we saw, so we arranged with Amalia Vagts and the Winneshiek County Courthouse to have our wedding there. Amalia was so encouraging and enthusiastic about our plans, and the county courthouse so helpful in leading us through the process, we knew we had

made the right choice.

“When we drove into Decorah, we were overwhelmed by the beauty and charm and friendliness of the town. We stayed in the Hotel Winnishiek, the historic old hotel on the main street, just around the block from the courthouse. The ceremony itself was performed in the courthouse, also historic and very beautiful, with Amalia, Joanna, and her children, Charlie and Scout, as witnesses. Having family participate in the ceremony was emotionally overwhelming. We are so grateful.”

Director Brenda K. Balk confirms, “‘You’re always welcome’ is the motto of the Winneshiek County Convention and Visitors Bureau. We want everyone to know that the Decorah area is a wonderful place for weddings for *all* couples. We have breathtaking parks and springs, and a historic courthouse that’s known to be one of the most beautiful in Iowa, plus amazing restaurants, and unique shops and art galleries.” ➡



Matt Puckett and Jerry Sands. Photo by Miss Devin Parker.



Same-sex marriage has been legal in Iowa since an Iowa Supreme Court decision on April 3, 2009.

Decorah, a town of about 8,200 only two-and-a-half hours from the Twin Cities, offers many opportunities for same-sex couples to realize their dreams.

In her words, “literally a staff of one,” Balk works closely with other businesses and organizations to assist couples in planning their nuptials.

Balk recommended Vagts’s website as “a great new service that specifically helps GLBT individuals have a wonderful wedding experience. You must check it out!”

Twin Citians Matt Puckett and Jerry Sands did just that.

Puckett recounts, “My husband and I were so thrilled to come across Amalia’s website! We knew we wanted to get married in Iowa, since it was so close to the Cities, but were at a loss as to what resources to use so we could find LGBT-friendly people to work with. We went down to Decorah to check things out, and instantly fell in love with the town and the people. Everyone we met was so nice and accommodating, and didn’t bat

an eye at two men planning a wedding.

“We were also in contact with Amalia at that time, and decided to meet her on our second trip down, as we were having some challenges finding someone to officiate our ceremony. It was an instant connection. We knew right away that she knew what it meant for two people of the same sex to be getting married, and how important that was.”

While Balk does not have records of just how many same-sex marriages have taken place in Decorah, she notes that the local acceptance of same-sex marriage is positive.

Balk observes, “Decorah is a very diverse community, and although there are varying opinions, people seem to have respect for one another. All weddings have an economic impact on this community, so there are certainly businesses that do whatever they can to cater all brides- and grooms-to-be. That’s one of the great things about Amalia’s site—she has spent a considerable amount of time placing local businesses on this site who have specifically stated that they will welcome GLBT couples.”

Vagts’s records show that since that April 3, 2009, as she informs, “About 80 GLBT

couples have traveled from outside Iowa to get married in Decorah, from Florida, California, Texas, and Alabama—over 17 states. The majority have come from the Twin Cities. I personally have interacted with a number of the couples, helping them connect with local vendors, or decide where to hold their wedding.”

Founder and President Vagts started Welcome in Decorah with her sister in April 2010, as, she states, “a wedding hospitality website for all couples. Our specific desire was to provide full hospitality to gay and lesbian couples thinking about marrying in Iowa. We started working with local vendors and a local design team to create a beautiful and welcoming site, and launched it December 1, 2010, with broad support from a number of key businesses in Decorah. The site is largely volunteer-run, with all proceeds going to promoting and maintaining the site.”

Vagts clarifies that while “the website is completely separate from the tourism, the bureau has been extremely supportive of our work and very welcoming to LGBT couples.”

As happens all too often, some are committed to denying equal rights to fellow ➤

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citizens. Iowa is no exception.

Carolyn Jenison, Executive Director of One Iowa, the state's largest GLBT advocacy organization, comments on last November's firing by voters of Iowa Supreme Court judges who allowed gay marriage: "In many ways, the vote to remove three of our well-qualified justices has been a wake-up call. For proequality advocates, it's a reminder that we need to do a better job at countering the influence of out-of-state extremists on our judicial system."

"Nearly a million dollars was spent by opponents of equality to smear our justices, and influence our system. Iowans don't like being told how to think or vote. Going forward, the best defense we have to counter this influence is to have everyday Iowans speaking out about why a fair and independent judiciary is important to them. That loss hurt, but we still have time to protect the independent judicial system that has served Iowa so well over the past few decades."

Jenison points out, "I haven't spoken to a single couple who has had a negative wedding experience in Iowa. Iowans, by and large, are fair-minded and welcoming. Whatever one thinks about [same-sex] marriage, the couples that have celebrated their big day in Iowa have been treated to the hospitality and respect we expect in the heartland. Across the state, businesses and faith communities have opened their doors to welcome couples that choose to marry in Iowa."

CJ Lucke of San Diego, who recently wed Jessica Cummins in Decorah, affirms, "The people in Decorah really did welcome us, from the County Clerk to the florist who created our bouquets in an hour to our minister who has been an incredible advocate for the gay community. It made our wedding day perfect, especially because we had eloped, and it was just the two of us."

"It would have been easier to fly into Des Moines, but it was important for us to be married in a church, because my partner is a practicing Catholic. When we saw the little white steeple on this historic Lutheran Church in Decorah, we knew this was the place."

Lucke continues, "People ask why it is



Matt Puckett and Jerry Sands. Photo by Miss Devin Parker

important to be married, and not just have a civil union. All you had to do was see the reaction of everyone when we returned from our 'elopement.' Both of our families and friends know what it means when someone is married. It is a very public commitment, and a legal contract that is celebrated by our society. We do not yet have a way to celebrate civil unions with the same emotional community support that a wedding conjures up for people."

"Shocked, happy, upset, overjoyed—we had a variety of responses to our announcement—but all of them were very deep, because people know our decision was serious, and that we went all the way to Iowa to make

our point: We're married. Just like you."

Balk and the Decorah Convention and Visitors Bureau continue to welcome one and all.

As Balk puts it, "We're 'small-town trendy,' and can offer friendly service, amazing food with local flair, as well as one-of-a-kind accommodations nestled in a rolling-hills and bluffs region whose beauty can't be beat. Who wouldn't want to get married in Decorah?"

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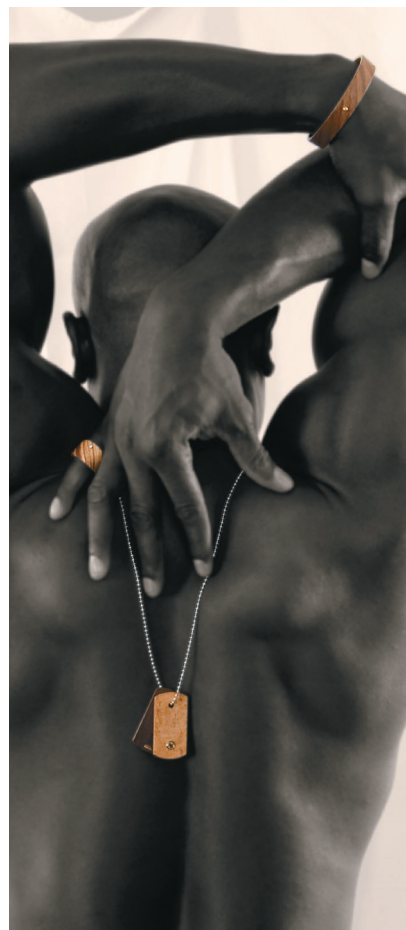


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WINNING MARRIAGE EQUALITY DEBUTS IN ST. CLOUD

✎ FOUNDER DENNY SMITH TELLS WHY ✎

Marriage equality has been in the spotlight recently, as President Barack Obama announced the federal ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional, spurring Democrats in Washington, DC, to discuss an attempt to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA).

Denny Smith of St. Cloud, Minnesota, wants to bring the same-sex marriage debate to the forefront both statewide and beyond through the new organization he founded, Winning Marriage Equality (WME), of which is Executive Director.

A longtime GLBT advocate, retired teacher, and author of *God did TOO make Adam and Steve*, Smith says, “People have a right to live their life in a state of happiness and with the person that they choose. That’s what’s driven me to this.”

Smith incorporated WME in January with the ultimate goal to energize and educate those in the GLBT community and allies alike. It aspires to mobilize others,

through seminars and rallies, to advocate for marriage equality, and employ various media to disseminate their ideas.

As Smith shares, he has “high stakes” in WME. His eldest son, Kyle, and his son’s partner, Joe, have been in a committed relationship for 16 years. Although they were unable to marry, Joe immediately was accepted as part of the family.

Smith explains, “I considered Joe my son-

in-law. Everything was this really neat, normal family life. But then, the legal shoe fell.”

Joe was in the United State on a student visa, and when it expired, he had to return to the Philippines.

Smith relates that the separation was “absolutely devastating. Here are two bright, young people who love each other, and they can’t be together.”

As Smith notes, if Kyle had the same rights as his brothers, he could be with the one he loves. While Kyle and Joe lived in Seattle, they would go home to St. Cloud for the holidays every year. Smith recalls that the first Christmas without Joe, Kyle was miserable.

So, as Smith puts it, “One of my goals is, before I meet my maker, I want my whole family together for Christmas.”

Smith clarifies that his family is just one example of the effects of denied GLBT rights, and people all over the country ➡



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are experiencing similar hardships.

In Smith's words, "There are a lot of people in a lot of pain, and quite frankly, that shouldn't happen in America."

Smith's emotional family situation interweaves with his positive message that things are going to change.

WME, according to its mission statement, is pursuing "equality, respect and dignity for LGBT people, their families, and their relationships."

Its founder wants not only to pursue the goals and spread the ideals of WME, but also prepare others to do the same, as he points out: "My major goal here is to get out the message. Give people the courage to stand up, and then give them information to have meaningful dialogue."

WME, which is funded by donations and fundraising, aims to train others to advocate for marriage equality through positive and productive means.

Smith observes, "Eventually, we want to have people well-versed enough that they can go out, and do what we're doing. I'm not on an ego trip about my message. I really want everybody to start talking about this."

As Smith emphasizes, WME, in addition to stoking debate, is striving to muster not only those in the GLBT community, but allies as well.

In Smith's view, "More than anything, I see so much potential out there to energize a base of allies. My contention is this: We don't have to argue with the antigay organizations. We don't have to shout them. All we have to do is outnumber them. This is a constitutional issue guaranteeing people equal rights. Moral or immoral—we can argue that until we are blue in the face—but it doesn't matter. This is a constitutional issue."

Smith expresses that he is "optimistic" in regard to the current political climate in Minnesota—a Republican majority in the State Legislature and a Democratic Governor—and its effect on the progress of marriage equality, adding, "Not everybody shares my optimism yet. But give us a year."

WME is working to pass the torch of optimism in a time when some are fighting to uphold legislation that restricts equal rights for GLBT people, Smith comments, while others attempt to define what constitutes a family.



Denny Smith. Photo Courtesy of Denny Smith

Smith muses, "Traditional family is determined by love, not by makeup. I don't see how we can criticize love, but yet, as a society, we have a tendency to do that."

While discussing future legislation, either local or national, granting marriage equality, Smith remarks that when it gets on the ballot, "Let's make darn sure we are energized and informed."

Smith states that WME's hope ultimately is to equip any who feel intimidated with information and courage actively to pursue and defend what should be guaranteed by the US Constitution.

As Smith asserts, "We don't have to choose to be intimidated anymore. We have a great message. We have a message of love. We have a message of equality. We have a message of family values. We have all of those good things, and all we have to do is get out, and tell our story."

WME will conduct free seminars throughout March in Duluth, Minneapolis, and St. Cloud. Smith, who has extensive experience as a professional orator and seminar leader, will speak at the events.

For more information, visit <www.wme-now.org>. **KAITLYN E. WALSH**



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CHANGE I'D RATHER NOT BELIEVE IN

In late February, Attorney General Eric Holder announced that following two years to the contrary, the Obama Administration no longer would defend the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in court.

During his surprise announcement, Holder said that, following an examination of pending legal challenges, both he and President Barack Obama no longer believe the law is constitutional.

On February 23, Holder elaborated: "After careful consideration, including a review of my recommendation, the President has concluded that given a number of factors, including a documented history of discrimination, classifications based on sexual orientation should be subject to a more heightened standard of scrutiny. The President has also concluded that Section 3 of DOMA, as applied to legally married same-sex couples, fails to meet that standard and is therefore unconstitutional."

DOMA was signed into law 15 years ago by President Bill Clinton, preventing the federal government from recognizing same-sex unions in any way. Not only that, the law actually penalizes couples who wed in states and countries where same-sex marriage is legal and/or recognized.

One of the very cases that led to the White House's change of opinion, in fact, involves a lesbian widow who was forced to pay more than \$360,000 in taxes after her wife died, which any heterosexual married couple would not be required to do.

All told, DOMA, according to a 1997 General Accounting Office report, prevents legally-married couples from receiving 1,049

federal benefits, rights, and privileges.

Following the surprise announcement, as one might expect, the Internet and social networks erupted with heaps of both praise and scorn alike.

Many in the gay and lesbian community unsurprisingly praised the President's decision.

Human Rights Campaign (HRC) President Joe Solmonese noted, "This is a monumental decision for the thousands of same-sex couples and their families who want nothing more than the same rights and dignity afforded to other married couples."

The ever-audible antigay Maggie Gallagher of the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) called the President's decision an "end run around our normal constitutional processes."

While I'm certainly beyond a little elated to learn that the Obama Administration finally has decided to stop defending in court the federal DOMA—an act the President has stated he opposed even prior to his election—I'm afraid this is quite possibly just one more example of a politician using the gay and lesbian community as a political football.

I find it extremely hard to believe the very same administration that has played politics with more than one issue of fundamental equality for the GLBT community suddenly has found gay Jesus, and reversed its course.

You have to ask yourself: Why would an administration that, up until a couple months ago, actively defended legislation it claimed it opposed suddenly change its mind?

This administration, mind you, still actively is fighting an appeal of Don't Ask,

Don't Tell. This administration is led by a President who, according to his own press secretary, still is "grappling" with his personal views on the subject of same-sex marriage.

Sadly, Holder's announcement comes across like one more awkward step in the administration's continuing kabuki dance with the GLBT community.

Michael Steele, spokesman for Republican House Speaker John Boehner, questioned why Obama "thinks now is the appropriate time to stir up a controversial issue that sharply divides the nation," when "most Americans want Washington to focus on creating jobs and cutting spending."

First of all, Steele and Boehner need look no further for an answer than the various Republican-controlled state legislatures throughout the country that have opted to pursue constitutional same-sex marriage bans instead of "creating jobs."

Still, I can't help but wonder if setting up same-sex marriage to be a wedge issue in 2012 is any more desirable than it was in 2004.

Ultimately, I'd like to believe Obama believes gay and lesbian people are equal—that they should be allowed to marry, and enjoy the same rights, benefits, and privileges extended to every other American.

But that belief isn't enough. Obama's actions since taking office show that he's willing to compromise his beliefs for political gain. Playing politics with people's rights isn't new, but it's not what many expected from the "change" President. **BRADLEY TRAYNOR**

SHADES OF YELLOW (SOY) NEW YEAR

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BIG GAY NEWS



NATIONAL

HAWAII APPROVES SAME-SEX CIVIL UNIONS

Reuters reports that Hawaii Governor Neil Abercrombie has signed legislation granting gay and lesbian couples in the state the right to enter into civil unions. They provide the same state protections and benefits previously afforded only to heterosexual married couples. Abercrombie said in a statement, "For me, this bill represents equal rights for all the people of Hawaii."

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE CASE IN CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT

The case against California's ban on same-sex marriage was back in court in February. Last year, a federal judge ruled that the state's Proposition 8, banning same-sex marriage, was unconstitutional. The case was appealed to the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals. It asked the California Supreme Court to determine whether the ban's supporters have the authority to defend it in court, because state officials have refused to do so. The high court unanimously decided to make the determination later this year. Oral arguments aren't expected until at least September.

SAN FRANCISCO HEALTH OFFICIALS URGE GAY MEN TO USE FEMALE CONDOMS

According to the Associated Press, San Francisco health officials are urging women and gay men to use a new condom similar to the female one introduced in the mid-1990s. The redesigned condom is made of thinner, softer, more-comfortable material. Officials hope use of it will help fight the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases.

MASSACHUSETTS TRANSGENDER STATE WORKERS GET AID FROM GOVERNOR

The Boston Globe reports that Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick issued an executive order in February banning discrimination against transgender state employees. It is considered a first ➔

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BIG GAY NEWS

step toward getting statewide legislation enacted. Transgender advocates applauded the order.

INDIANA HOUSE PASSES CONSTITUTIONAL BAN ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

The Indiana House overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage in the state. It now heads to the Senate. If enacted, the amendment would ban not only same-sex marriage, but also any legally-recognized same-sex relationship resembling marriage, such as civil unions or domestic partnerships.

WYOMING SENATE PASSES BILL PREVENTING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE RECOGNITION

The Wyoming Senate voted by a narrow margin in February to pass a bill that would prevent the state from recognizing same-sex marriages and civil unions performed outside the state. A similar measure was passed in the House, but last-minute changes mean the Senate version first must head back to the House for approval.

CALIFORNIA MAN ARRESTED FOR ANTIGAY VANDALISM

In Long Beach, California, 23-year-old Oliver Rodrich Saintvictor has been arrested for allegedly vandalizing gay and lesbian businesses in the city. Police say he smashed windows of three different businesses in December. He has been charged with felony vandalism including a special allegation for a hate crime.

WORLD

ISRAEL APPOINTS FIRST OPENLY GAY JUDGE

According to YNetNews, attorney Dori Spivak became Israel's first openly-gay judge when he recently was appointed to the Tel Aviv Labor Court. Deputy Director of Tel Aviv University's law clinics, he is a veteran gay-rights activist. Spivak's partner and academic colleague, Dr. Yishai Blank, told YNet, "I don't think sexual preferences had anything to do with this appointment. It's a happy occasion for us personally, and also for the state." **WRITTEN & COMPILED BY BRADLEY TRAYNOR**

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Jesus Christ Superstar proves even more timely than when Artistic Director Michael Brindisi began rehearsals for this I-can't-believe-it's-the-first-time production at Chanhassen Dinner Theatres. By opening night, the oligarchies of Tunisia and Egypt had toppled, and public uprisings in surrounding lands were delivering the same message with the urgency of a ticking time bomb: that the days of a corrupt ruling class were over. But in Bahrain and Yemen, populist messiahs are being shot. Iran's Ayatollah has plenty of nails, hammers, and crosses at his disposal.

Thus, Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's rock opera of 1971 proves that it's no dated artifact of a former musical era. As it romps and rocks across Chan's stage (and, indeed, through the aisles of the dinner theater), it segues from rock-and-roll anthems to graceful ballads that clearly have stood the test of time. If you're not right there cheerleading with the title anthem, or misting up when Mary Magdalene sings "I Don't Know How to Love Him," check your pulse.

As we've come to expect at the Chanhassen, the production succeeds (no: skyrocket!) because of its talented team of directors, designers, and ensemble members.

Nayna Ramey's monochromatic set—timeworn blocks of stone accented by shiny metal bars of almost cruel countenance—forms a simple backdrop for the mesmerizing, fresh, and cheeky choreography of Tamara Kangas Erickson that steals the show.

Rich Hamson's costumes exhibit a similar timeless/timely contrast, playing robes of muted earth tones against guys in trench



Photo by Act One, Too Ltd.

coats and the menacing black leather jacket Judas sports. Of course, a Swedish-looking Jesus does wear white pajamas, but we're spared Mother Mary dressed in blue.

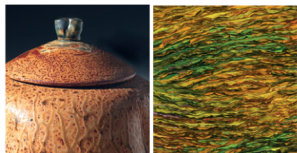
Backed by Music Director Andrew Cooke's classy band elevated at stage rear, and overly-amplified but otherwise engaging voices—each evoking personality as well as singing talent—Brindisi delivers a deliciously ebullient reading of the rock opera. He knows not only when to escalate the bounce, but also how to play the tender moments true, and they'll break your heart more than the inevitable ending.

Chan newcomer Michelle Carter as Mary Magdalene is an earthy but tender chanteuse. Jared Oxborough's clear and ringing Judas

is spot-on. Veteran David Anthony Brinkley as a politically-cornered Pontius Pilate, plus a marathon cast of priests and disciples, provide fine performances by Chan regulars. Jay Albright, in particular, gets to steal the show with "King Herod's Song," a send-up of a Follies-style number. And as Jesus, Ben Bakken, from *All Shook Up*, *Footloose*, and *Altar Boyz*, adds another feisty renegade to his repertoire. **CARLA WALDEMAR**

Jesus Christ Superstar

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Celebrating Women's History Month



Song of Extinction. Photo by Michal Daniel

***Song of Extinction* • Through Mar. 20 • Guthrie Dowling Studio • 818 S. 2nd St., Mpls. • (612) 377-2224 • www.guthrietheater.org**

Theatre Latte Da director Peter Rothstein shares that EM Lewis's drama with music, *Song of Extinction*, "explores how we as human beings define, defy, and embrace the concept of extinction intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Max [Dan Piering], a 15-year-old cellist, can only begin to address the vast topic in a language without words: music. It culminates in his composition, *The Song of Extinction*." This unusual choice for Theater Latte Da is acted with delicate sensitivity, but Lewis's use of the bigoted term "retard" works against her otherwise worthy intentions.

Dido, Queen of Carthage

Through Mar. 20

Gremlin Theatre
2400 University Ave. W., St. Paul
(612) 874-9321

www.theatreprorata.org

Over the centuries, many scholars have theorized that had playwright Christopher "Kit" Marlowe (1564-1593) lived longer, he would have equaled his contemporary, William Shakespeare. As a homosexual, an active spy, and a professed atheist in Elizabethan England, Marlowe was a marked man. His death by stabbing is shrouded in controversy.

Marlowe's first play, *Dido*,

Queen of Carthage, revived by Theatre Pro Rata at Gremlin Theatre, muses on history and myth. It also reflects his devil-may-care approach to life.

As director Carin Bratlie puts it, "Marlowe was thumbing his nose at the usual pictures of love, and having great fun doing it."

Dramaturg Christine "Kit" Gordon says Marlowe "opens the play with a scene among the gods: Jupiter dallying with his love, Ganymede, a human from Troy with whom he fell in love, and made immortal as a cupbearer to the gods. This initial pairing is only the first of a series of 'inap-

propriate' matches in the play: assertive women pursuing men, an old nurse suddenly a bit too fond of her young charge. Only one relationship in the play is traditionally heterosexual, with a dominant male pursuing a woman."

Shirley Valentine

Through Mar. 20

Jungle Theater
2951 Lyndale Ave. S., Mpls.
(612) 822-7063

www.jungletheater.com

It's hard to believe, but as recently as the 1980s, a critical mass of women had yet basically to question gender roles. Cheryl

Willis's wonderful turn in Willy Russell's 1986 solo play shows how far we've come since then. A Liverpool housewife hits middle age, and painfully realizes how defined both she and her blue-collar husband have been by their respective social functions. She sees that she has been reduced to an overworked housekeeper, and her husband to an overworked provider. As dull as her plight may seem, this human comedy actually shines like a gem. Shirley wrestles with self-pity and self-absorption en route to regaining her lost true self. Once again, Jungle Director Bain Boehlke guides a performance that surpasses the Oscar-nominated film portrayal, with Willis besting Pauline Collins.

Stillness

Through Mar. 20

Walker Art Center
1750 Hennepin Ave., Mpls.
(612) 375-7600

www.walkerart.org

Gay choreographer Merce Cunningham (1919-2009) and gay composer John Cage (1912-1992) were life partners and artistic collaborators for roughly a half-century. In 2007, Tacita Dean filmed Cunningham sitting serenely while listening to Cage's iconic *4'33"*, a unique composition that requires its musicians *not* to play instruments—the idea being that there really is no such thing as silence. We hear ambient street noises in the background. This tranquil, Zen-like film, titled *Stillness*, plays in a spacious Walker gallery.



The Winter's Tale. Photo by T. Charles Erickson

The Winter's Tale

Through Mar. 27

Guthrie Wurtele Thrust Stage
818 S. 2nd St., Mpls.
(612) 377-2224

www.guthrietheater.org



Girls Only: The Secret Comedy of Women.
Photo by Terry Shapiro

Shakespeare revolutionized the role of women. In this peculiar 1611 comedy, he sympathizes with Hermione (a gracious Michelle O'Neill), a queen wrongly accused of infidelity by her obsessed husband, King Leontes (a riveting Michael Hayden). The bard then has Paulina (a breathtaking Helen Carey) defy Leontes with a force that puts the palace's sycophantic males to shame. Things accelerate when Leontes interrogates Hermione, dressed like an Auschwitz victim, for her alleged adultery.

Director Jonathan Munby's magnetic staging is enhanced with fetching and funny men wearing little clothing, as well as randy rustic women hot to trot in the second half. It fleshes out the play's Apollo-versus-Dionysius dichotomy, and emanates Shakespeare's bisexual sensibility

Girls Only: The Secret Comedy of Women
Through Apr. 3

Hennepin Stages
824 Hennepin Ave., Mpls.
(800) 982-2787

www.HennepinTheatreTrust.org

Personal history becomes the stuff of sweet comedy. Twin Cities actresses Heidi Bakke and Nicole Fenstad successfully have taken over the two roles of this Denver-originated delight. First written and performed by Barbara Gehring and Linda Klein, the two Coloradans turned their girlhood diaries into sketch comedy that spoofs adolescent fears of sex, the history of women, and media images of feminine beauty. More than 95 percent of the audience is women, so some men may feel a bit out of place, especially in the scene where creative uses of feminine hygiene products hilariously are demonstrated. ■

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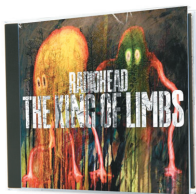




"Born This Way"

LADY GAGA

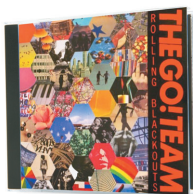
While Justin Bieber and the cast of *Glee*'s endless cover tunes fight it out for teen-pop supremacy on the Hot 100 charts, Lady Gaga puts them all to shame with her fast-rising latest single, "Born This Way." As an attempt at a dance-floor-packing new gay anthem, it works pretty well. Oh, sure, it sounds a hell of a lot like Madonna—and I'm not sure if "don't be a drag, be a queen" really is as fist-pumping a slogan as Lady Gaga thinks it is—but the song bounces along with plenty of dance energy. Though it's pretty mechanical, going the Madonna route means a little more humanity is here than in a lot of recent pop songs. Then again, Lady Gaga is as much an ongoing piece of performance art as a chart-topping musician, so the entire song's whole "emerging from the egg" version at the Grammys (shades of Spinal Tap there) really may be its lasting legacy.



The King of Limbs

RADIOHEAD

Over the past few years, Radiohead has become well-known for its mode of releasing music as much as their albums. On the heels of 2007's pay-what-you-can *In Rainbows* comes *The King of Limbs*. It can be purchased via the band's website for \$9 for the basic audio files, or more for a physical copy—which won't be out until the end of March in a normal edition, or May in a deluxe version. Meanwhile, the eight songs here continue the later-period, angst-ridden, dark-rock music that Radiohead has employed in the years following its experimental *Kid A*/*Amnesiac* era. It isn't the most accessible set of songs you'll hear this year, as the band often employs lots of dense electronic layers, loop effects, and other distortions to keep the listener off-kilter. Thom Yorke remains a maudlin soul, whispering and moaning his way in the front of the mix, leaving the listener feeling claustrophobic—in other words, typical Radiohead.



Rolling Blackouts

THE GO! TEAM

The third album from the Brighton sextet explodes in the opening seconds of "T.O.R.N.A.D.O." as a cheerleader-like chant fuels a quick two-minute dance stomp. It's a perfect introduction for the band's bright collection of fuzzy, dance-crazed noise, with distorted guitars, big beats, and jolly vocals from beginning to end. The Go! Team freely blends and bends genre to their pleasure, such as on "Apollo Throwdown," where hip-hop meets pop, all with a beat that would not sound out of place on a classic Tom Tom Club release. That immediately is followed by the Motown-like drive of "Ready to Go Steady." Then comes "Bust-Out Brigade," which sounds like the lost theme to some funky 1970s cop show. These disparate styles could become exhausting, but the band's good cheer and excellent chops give it the consistency needed to engage the listener from beginning to end. Lots of pop music wants you to feel good. The Go! Team actually makes you feel good.



Special Affections

DIAMOND RINGS

This one-man band impressed audiences during his recent opening slot for Robyn, and his debut album showcases that same potential. The brainchild of Canadian indie rocker John O'Regan, *Diamond Rings* features synth-heavy rock fueled by his smoky baritone, and a driving darkness that would not be out of place on albums by The Cure or Depeche Mode. That comes through lyrically as well, with lots of mentions of dying forests, hard times, falling out of love, and a three-wheeled hearse (he did start writing the songs while suffering from Crohn's Disease). Despite it all, this isn't a maudlin record. Instead, it seems to be full of the chilly winter energy of O'Regan's native Toronto, where the long dark nights can get you down, but also provide the fuel for musical thrills. You may feel a bit depressed listening to *Special Affections*, but you usually can dance to it—and that can count for a lot on a long winter night. ■

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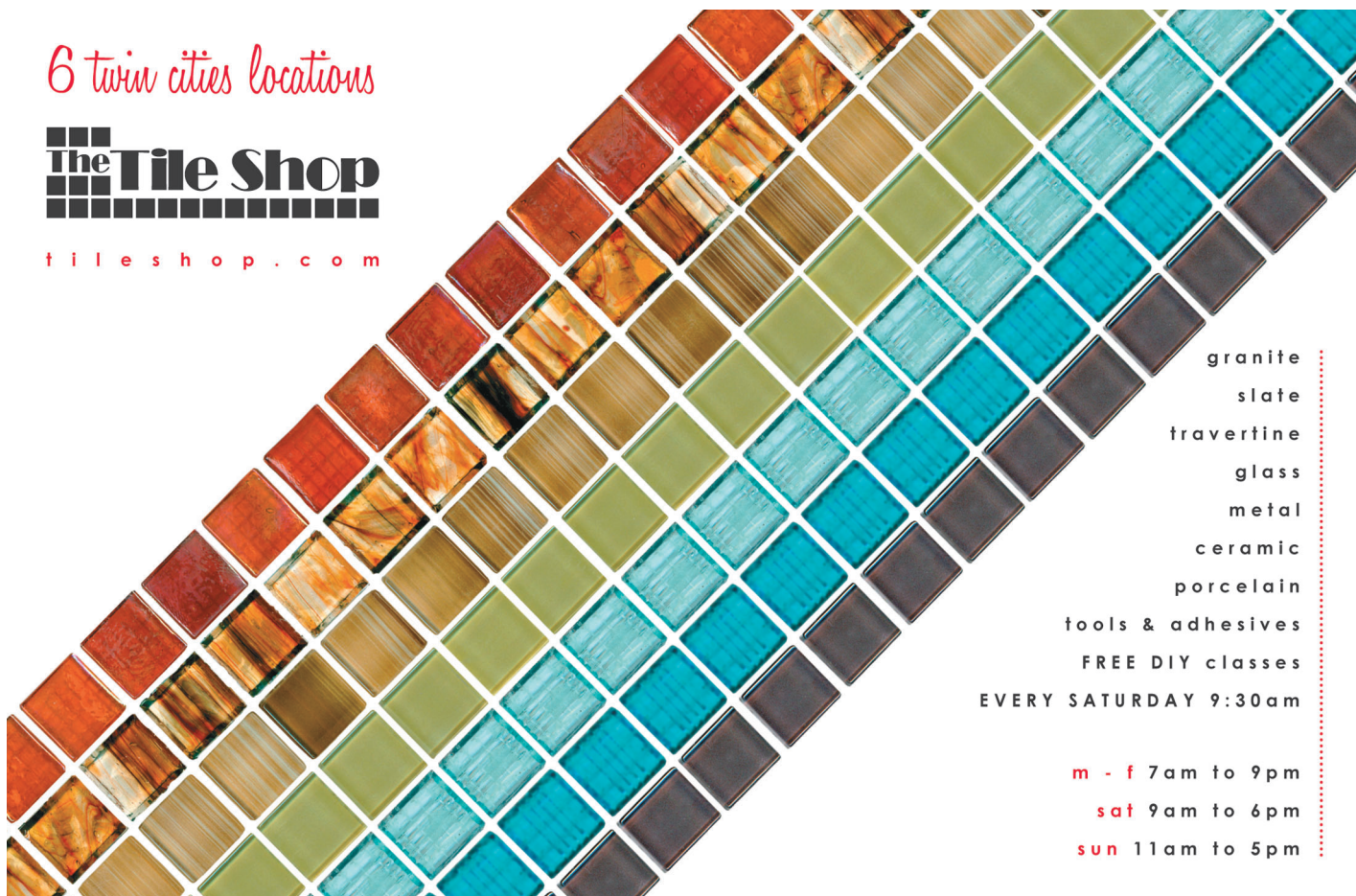
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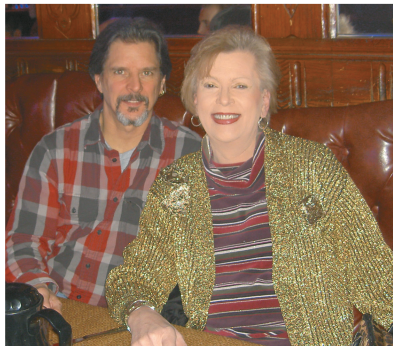
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February 25

Photos by George Holdgrafer



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Last Call at Score/Tickles Rechristened Bar Closes Abruptly

On February 28, Score/Tickles closed abruptly, which was surprising, given that the establishment only recently rechristened itself and remodeled.

An e-mail from the bar stated, "As we all know, in the last several years, the unpredictable economy has impacted all of us, including our customers and friends. It is our deepest regret to inform you that Tickles has decided it can no longer maintain its service to the GLBT community, and its responsibility to our employees. Effective February 28, 2011, Tickles has closed its operation. We would like to thank everyone for the support you have provided for the last two-plus years, and wish you well."

Score/Tickles is the third local GLBT bar to go under in the past four months, following on the demise of Rumours/Innuendo in Downtown St. Paul in October and Gladius in Downtown Minneapolis in December.

Owner Roy Caples and manager Joel Janssen opened Tickles in Northeast Minneapolis on November 14, 2008. They moved it to Downtown Minneapolis on December 31, 2009. In early February, they renamed it Score, emphasizing a sports-bar concept, while retaining the Tickles name for the piano lounge. **GEORGE HOLDGRAFER**

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BAR CALENDAR

For club addresses, phone numbers, and websites, see "Out on the Town Advertiser Guide" on page 36. For events not at bars, see <LavenderMagazine.com/calendar>.



FRIDAY, MARCH 11

YOLO
 9 PM. Town House.

SATURDAY, MARCH 12

TNT Show
 9 PM. Town House.
KnightRider Stallions
Drag Hing Show
 Coale's

FRIDAY, MARCH 18

Dragged Out
 9:30 PM. Town House.
Foam Party
 Dance Annex. Gay 90's.

SUNDAY, MARCH 20

Singler Pool Tournament
 4 PM. 19 Bar.

SATURDAY, MARCH 26

Fairytale Costume Ball
Emperor & Empress Ball
 Imperial Court of Minnesota Benefit for
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Elegance
 9 PM. Town House.
KnightRider Stallions
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A collage of three images: a restaurant interior with a red wall and a framed picture, a bowl of Roat Osha soup with a lime wedge, and a restaurant interior with a large vase. The text 'Roat Osha' is written in a stylized font over the bowl image, with 'A THAI TASTE EXPERIENCE' below it.

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Every time one writes about a pizzeria, a century-old debate is rekindled. We have come to a certain civilized understanding that pasta should be prepared al dente, but pizza crusts are another matter. Never has a food item been the source of such hot debate. As much as any food writer loves drama, it's almost too bad the crust gets all the attention.

Pizzeria Lola is delightfully choosy about its toppings, and employs them artfully, but I would be remiss if I didn't dwell on its masterful crust...and perhaps make a few enemies in the process.

Ann Kim, co-owner and certified pizzaiola, took a little more than a year to perfect her crust. The dough, however, is only half the battle. A perfect crust also requires the perfect oven, which is something you don't exactly hide. Kim's copper, wood-fired beast dominates the restaurant like some sort of steampunk emperor. Apart from its titanic grandeur, the oven is also an internal marvel, made with imported Terre Blanche clay for superior heat resistance.

Kim wasn't aiming for the classic Neopolitan crust with its blistered finish, opting instead for New York's style. Though classic crust enthusiasts may take issue with me, I am sold on Kim's version. To be honest, I never have been enamored with the taste of charred dough, although I do understand its inherent appeal. But Kim's crust has an intensely sat-

isfying bite that gives way to a dense, chewy center. Sink your teeth into it, and prepare to meet your inner savage. My dining partner is a notorious crust-discarder, but at this place, no so much as a crumb was left.

Pizzeria Lola definitely has its focus, but we tried three different starters, finding each of them to be exceptional, right down to the

addictively-salty Mixed Olives (\$4).

A feisty Roasted Cauliflower with Calabrian chili (\$8), sprinkled with sea salt and fresh parsley, is a pointed reminder of what this lowly member of the cruciferous family can do when in the right hands.

Still, Roasted Baby Beets with Mixed Greens, Montchevre, and Hazelnuts ➡

Wood-fired oven dominates the restaurant. Photos by Hubert Bonnet



Co-owner Ann Kim preparing a pizza.

(\$11) stole the show. The hazelnuts added a buttery, slightly-bitter quality to the sweet beets, and creamy, handcrafted Montchevre goat cheese is, of course, heavenly. A roasted beet salad is something I always appreciate, but in the hands of chef Chris Hinrichs, the dish had a degree of vitality one does not always find elsewhere.

The pizza menu is varied, with traditional crowd-pleasers as well as some funky little gems.

The Lady Za Za (\$15), with housemade kimchi sausage, shishito peppers, soy, scalions, and sesame oil, is a must-try for the adventurous. I didn't know that I'd fall in love with a Korean pizza, but it's spicy and



(Above) La Crème Pizza; (Below) Lady Za Za Pizza.

flavorful—very hard to stop eating.

The Forager (\$15) followed a tough act, although the combination of truffle cheese and truffle salt over roasted seasonal mushrooms would be enough to make any foodie swoon—and that we did.

We also tried La Crème (\$11), a more traditional pie with red sauce, shaved Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, cream, olive oil, and basil, as well as The Sunnyside (\$15), with La Quercia Guanciale (a mild bacon), pecorino, cream, leeks, and soft eggs. If you wish, you may add ingredients like prosciutto or arugula for an additional charge. On our La Crème, for example, we enjoyed the addition of some spunky pepperoni.

With our pizzas, we drank a com- ➞

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CUISINE ♦ OFF THE EATEN PATH



Roasted Cauliflower with Calabrian Chili.

mendable Italian barolo (\$65/bottle). The wine list at Pizzeria Lola is as varied and intriguing as the rest of the menu, but I was very glad to have the lush but dry, high-tannin red at our disposal.

Even the desserts are thoughtful and distinct. A dish of housemade soft-serve ice




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cream (\$4) arrived with a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil and fleur de sel. Another soon appeared with chocolate-covered cacao nibs (either addition is an extra \$1). I appreciated the lighter soft-serve, and also the change from the typical Sebastian Joe's selections. I love Sebastian Joe's—don't get me wrong—but it was very nice to be offered something different.

Our other after-dinner treat was a \$3 ticket to Pizzeria Lola's photo booth. The establishment hasn't been open long, but merry little photo-booth strips of happy, well-fed families already are decorating its walls.

In fact, for an upscale pizzeria, it's very kid-friendly. On the night I dined there, at least one child was at almost every table. If that's off-putting to any of you, I also mention that one impatient little shrieker immediately was calmed by the quick appearance of goldfish crackers, courtesy of some very smart staff.

Pizzeria Lola may have intended to be a neighborhood restaurant, and it certainly serves its environs very, very well. But for my money, it is also a foodie destination.

HEIDI FELLNER



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CROATIA

Here, in Zagreb's epicenter of everything that matters, it's all about where you stand and who you know.

In Croatia's capital, Zagreb, I'm trailing my tour guide, a woman of a certain age in purple knickers with spectacles to match, as we tour the history museum. "Old stuff," she offers by way of explanation. But when we alight on the main square, buzzing with people, her observations become more precise: "Where you meet up here says who you are: By the statue, the upper crust. Under the clock, the trendy crowd. By the bookstore, the intellectuals."

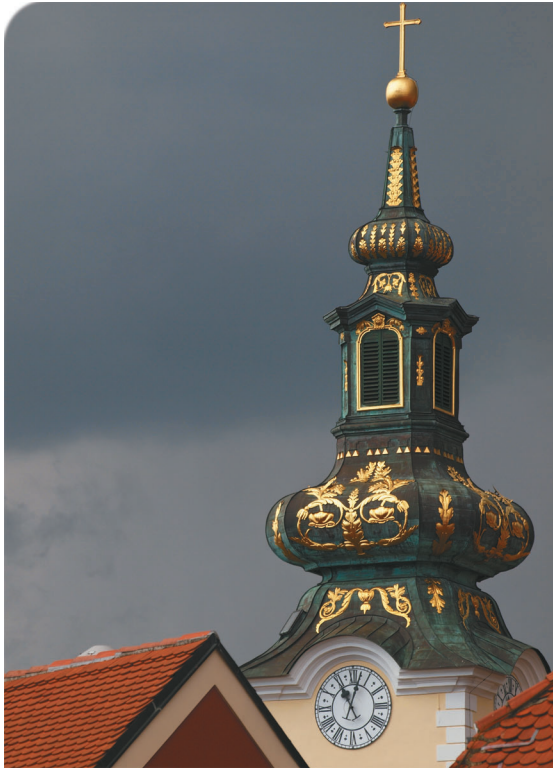
She greets a local jazz idol, points out a potent politician, hails a film star, and waves to a noted journalist. Here, in Zagreb's epicenter of everything that matters, it's all about where you stand and who you know—forget the dusty artifacts of former glory days. The troubling times before Croatia's independence in 1991 are forgotten in the face of more pressing matters, such as how to dress. Thus, the purple knickers.

Hiding the jeans and sneakers in the bottom of my suitcase, I slipped into a little black something better suited to the Regent Esplanade, a hotel as grand as the White House (no, grander), and found a seat in its stylish restaurant, Zinfandels. Asking why it was named after a Hungarian grape, I quickly was informed that the world had got it all wrong: "It's from Croatia," the sommelier declared.

Instead, he poured me a glass of golden Malvasia, the country's most distinctive



(Above) Zagreb. (Below) Zagreb's Daily Market. Photo by Carla Waldemar



(From left) Steeple; old part of Zagreb city center.



THE TROUBLING TIMES BEFORE CROATIA'S INDEPENDENCE IN 1991 ARE FORGOTTEN IN THE FACE OF MORE PRESSING MATTERS, SUCH AS HOW TO DRESS.

wine, and cried, “Madam! The stuckli is coming!” Welcome to an enormous raviolo oozing melting cheese—classic peasant fare redefined by a talented chef. Love at first bite. He also goes crazy with creations all his own, such as pork belly paired with octopus. With it, I sip a luscious red Teran from the vintner I’ll visit tomorrow.

So, blend right in with the locals: Eat, drink, and be merry. With that in mind, at dawn, I make my way to the city’s vast open market, just up the steps from the Guy on a Horse statue anchoring the square. On one side looms the city’s grand neo-Gothic Cathedral, and on the other an avenue (one of many) blooming with folks sipping coffee at umbrella-topped tables. “Starbucks failed here,” I’m told, “because we don’t drink coffee in a paper cup on the way to the office. We sit for hours at a table with friends.”

Nobody works here? Not by the body count on the “green horseshoe,” the necklace of voluptuous parks and promenades that collars the city, bordering both the Art Deco belles of the New Town, all sleek and pastel, and the Old Town’s Baroque matri-

archs lining the cobbled streets. Eat, drink, and be merry, indeed!

Pursuing that mantra, we head out along the Plesivica wine road, a 30-kilometer ribbon through vineyards of 32 small producers such as Korak, family-run for going on 250 years. Here, folks can sample supple Sauvignon Blanc; crisp Riesling; and Chardonnay smoothed by oak barrels—as well as the elegant Pinot Noir that accompanied the roast duck Velimir Korak’s wife, now folding napkins at another table, had prepared. “There are not many good Pinot Noir regions in the world,” he informs, then flashes his hundred-watt smile. “But this,” he declares, “is one of them!”

Next stop: tiny, Medieval Samobor, the weekend-getaway town for Zagreb’s urbanites—named “the Venice of Croatia” for the graceful bridges looping its twisting river. “Relax! Time has no power over us,” a sign instructs at the café on King Tomislav Square, where we stopped to sample krem-snite, the town’s famed cream pastry, with a ruby glass of Bermet, the local digestif.

More of the same tomorrow. Toeing our “Be Merry” theme, we strolled the main

street of Opatjia (named Marshall Tito, for the deceased leader of Communist Yugoslavia, of which Croatia was a part). Opatjia is a seaside playground frosting the sweet Adriatic waters of the Istria peninsula with plump villas-turned-hotels, onetime haunts of the Austro-Hungarian elite, along with hedonists Isadora Duncan and James Joyce.

Wafting a dolce vita that’s almost Italian (which, indeed, it was until 1954), palms shade an oceanside promenade peopled with kids licking ice cream cones; romantics nibbling roasted chestnuts; and grannies walking their manicured dogs past statues honoring local poets, artists, and—oh, yeah—soccer players. Nobody’s in a hurry.

Except me, the next morning. We’re heading to Livadia for its annual truffle festival. Purveyor stalls boast pyramids of the world’s most costly fungus. Truffles flavor honey, butter, pasta, cheese, prosciutto, and even grappa.

The air is rich with the unmistakable scent as we storm Restaurant Zigante for lunch. It’s not just your average cosmo restaurant. As if that weren’t enough, it’s run by the ➡



Croatia.

(self-crowned) King of Truffles, who shaves the costly delicacy with abandon over every single course, from carpaccio to homemade pasta, from duck breast to ice cream (yes, truffle ice cream, my new favorite flavor). Mr. Zigante expounds as he shaves away, “There are only three truffle regions in the world—France, Italy, and Croatia—and the Italians sneak our truffles over the border, and market them as theirs!”

What to drink with All Things Truffle? The fine wines of Digrassi and Koslovic, which we’d visit next—leaders of the many winemakers dotting this sunny peninsula. “Istria has become a trendy getaway,” according to Moreno Digrassi, who has had a big hand in this trend with his new style of winemaking. Pride of place goes to his

fresh and floral Malvasia; his delicate, citrusy Muscat, swell with desserts; and his intensely ruby Teran Terre Rosse, bearing a blackberry-cherry bouquet.

The Koslovics have pressed grapes from their 42 acres since 1906. But Franco Koslovic’s wine is vastly different from his Dad’s, thanks to his devotion to modern thoughts and technology. “New temperatures, more knowledge, thus wines with more personality” is how he sums up his achievements. Result: a fresh, light Malvasia, and its Riserva sister, boasting even more structure and elegance. But he’s not called the King of Muscat for nothing. “It’s a delicate grape, not easy to produce,” he says. His is sweet and floral on the palate—thus, perfect with, or for, dessert.

One last meal, and one last bottle of Malvasia to match seafood grilled over an open fire at Astarea, a nearby rustic café in the hands of genial, grandfatherly Nino, who pulls up a chair to extol what’s fresh today (no written menu—no need for one). Starters, ranging from shrimp to octopus to anchovies, then a squid-ink risotto, followed by a whole, ever-so-tender, white-fleshed corvina, accompanied by bowls of salad, potatoes, and TLC.

To see, sip, and taste for yourself, contact the Croatian National Tourist Office at <www.croatia.hr>. **CARLA WALDEMAR**

GAY ZAGREB

Guide

<http://www.croatia-gay.com/gay_guide_zagreb.htm>

Gay Film Festival: April
<www.queerzagreb.org>

Bars

Rush Club
(late-late-crowd; opens 11 PM)
g.club
(new; hot; dance floor; cages; fetish parties)
KIC Club
(artsy—boho vibe)
Kolaz
(local-secret basement bar; well-chosen music)
Denis
(cruising club; Sat. group nite party)
Studio Mobilus
(cruising club cum Internet café)

Saunas

Bumerang
David/Aquateam
g.sauna

Accommodations

pekas.info

Boutiques

Snax (military, leather, rubber)
MagicMarket Sex Shopovi

LEATHER, CREATING CHANGE, AND THE COMING POST-GLBT ERA

I have seen the future: the dawning of the post-GLBT era. But, I'm delighted to say, it does not need to be a post-kink era.

I saw the beginnings of this future at the 23rd annual Creating Change Conference, which the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) recently hosted in Minneapolis.

Yes, change definitely is being created, and it will affect those of us in the leather/BDSM/fetish community. But we have an opportunity to help create that change, and thereby influence it.

This year's conference attracted more than 2,500 people from across the United States and around the world for five days of education, skill-building, planning, networking, socializing, and dreaming. More than 300 workshops, caucuses, and plenary sessions were presented, all with the aim of developing effective and visionary leadership for the GLBT-rights movement.

At this conference, as in past ones, NGLTF set a big, beautiful banquet table at which everyone was welcome, as long as they were respectful of everyone else. Leather, BDSM, and fetish most definitely had a place at that table.

One of the weekend's highlights was the presentation of the sixth-annual Leather Leadership Award to Chuck Renslow—founder of the International Mr. Leather (IML) Contest, cofounder of the Leather Archives & Museum, and a genuine leather pioneer for the past six decades. The award ceremony included a color guard featuring representatives of Minnesota's leather/BDSM/fetish clubs and organizations, as well as former and future IML competitors. Matt Foreman, former NGLTF Executive Director, and Tyler McCormick, International Mr. Leather 2010, presented the award.

A strong leather/BDSM/fetish presence was elsewhere at the conference among presenters, exhibitors, and attendees, even (and perhaps especially) among younger people. Many workshops and caucuses that dealt with sexual liberation, leather, and kink were filled to overflowing. I found this remarkable—and hopeful.



Chuck Renslow (second from left) received the Leather Leadership Award at the Creating Change Conference. Photo by Inga Sarda-Sorensen

I saw many people in the crowd, especially many of the young, who struck me as post-GLBT. For them, the words “gay,” “lesbian,” “bi,” and “trans” almost are losing their meaning, because they limit people, and put them in pigeonholes.

The crowd here didn't want to be categorized. Fluidity and ambiguity were the order of the day in race, gender, and orientation. Many did not define themselves as either/or, as formerly this but now that. They saw themselves more as finding a spot on a continuum that suits them for now, and tomorrow, they might choose a different spot on the continuum. Similarly, they don't expect others to conform to rigid definitions of race, gender, or affectional preference.

However, regardless of such preference, I also saw a great interest in, and a hunger for knowledge about, kink and the leather/BDSM/fetish community. Considering this, I feel safe in predicting that our community, our tribe, will continue. But the nature of it will change.

It still will be a place for men who prefer men and women who prefer women—and

even for those who prefer the opposite gender. But we need to make space around the table for people who embrace fluidity in various aspects of their lives.

Fluidity is something that has not been a huge factor in our community's history and culture. But now, we as a community need to be open to people who see themselves and the world in a different way than we do, but who respect what we have, and want to be part of it.

If we can be open, we will be rewarded with a growing community and more influence in society. If we can't, we will be closing ourselves off from the future, and from some very good and sincere people. We will be segregating ourselves, and limiting our opportunities for social influence.

Why would we want to do that?

Change is being created. We, as a community, can fool ourselves into thinking we can resist what in reality cannot be resisted, and become marginalized and irrelevant as a result. Or, we can embrace change, and participate in its creation. The choice is ours.

STEVE LENIUS

True Nightmares

I'm 14 years old when it first happens. I'm laying in bed with my eyes closed, the sound of *The Golden Girls* lulling me to sleep. I have school tomorrow. It's about 11. I'm thinking of a midterm, a project, or something.

My television shuts off. Strange, I think, I don't remember setting the sleep timer. I decide to switch it back on, but something's not right. I can't move—at all.

I can't reach for my remote. I can't climb out of bed. I can't wiggle my toes. I can't move my fingers. I can't...scream. I'm in a state of incomprehension. Total shock. I'm paralyzed.

My heart starts racing, and an unexplainable pressure collects on my chest, pushing me into the springs of my mattress. I look, but I see nothing.

And all hell breaks loose.

The door to my bedroom slams closed, and an impossibly loud crash comes from upstairs. I hear someone run past my bed, and scratch violently on my bedroom wall. A strange figure suddenly looms over me, and gets too close. He screams in my face. I feel his breath on my cheeks.

I want to scream so bad, I can't stand it, but I can do nothing but lay and watch.

This is all real to me. I know—I *know*—I'm not dreaming, and I think this must be how it is when people die a violent death. I'm going to die. I know it.

The pressure on my chest grows until I can't breathe—and then, Dorothy and Blanche suddenly are fighting over a man. I hear Sophia, and the laughter of a studio audience.

I'm in my bed. My bedroom door is wide open. No intruders.

This was not a nightmare. I was totally conscious while this occurred. I realize that I've experienced some sort of hallucination, one I will come to know as sleep paralysis. It's common, and believe it or not, many of you have experienced or will experience it once or twice in your lifetime.

Here's the gist: While you sleep at night,



your body paralyzes itself. It does so to protect you from acting out your dreams. This happens to everyone, and it's a great thing—when it works correctly.

Most of the time, we lose consciousness, and *then*, our bodies paralyze themselves. Rarely, though, the body gets the order wrong. This is when our bodies paralyze *before* we lose consciousness. Because our brains think we're asleep, we sometimes enter a premature rapid eye movement (REM) sleep cycle during this event.

In other words, during sleep paralysis, we may begin to dream while we're conscious, completely aware of our surroundings—and completely unable to move.

So, how's sleep paralysis different from a nightmare? Beyond that you're completely conscious during it, sleep paralysis differs from nightmares in another, particularly

mysterious way. Sufferers of sleep paralysis all report experiencing remarkably universal themes. It almost always entails an intense pressure on the chest, loud noises, and the feeling of a threatening presence in the room. Why? If you find out, let me know.

So, what causes sleep paralysis? It can be a symptom of narcolepsy, although that's not always the case. I, for one, am not narcoleptic. Sleep paralysis also is linked to irregular sleep habits, lack of sleep, and stress.

The folklore also abounds mightily, as you might imagine. Some believe sleep paralysis is a demonic visitation.

I live with sleep paralysis. I experience it four to five times a week. Other than just being scary as hell, it poses no harmful effect (and only lasts about a minute or two). I'm in my 10th year dealing with it, and its frequency and intensity change with the weather. Winters are the hardest (Minneapolis, baby!), while some summers go by without a single episode.

Don't feel sorry for me. Experiencing sleep paralysis so frequently means I've got a pretty good grasp on how to deal with it, and it's a cakewalk compared to what it was.

I can't say I love sleep paralysis, but something's weirdly enthralling about it, as if you've superimposed a roller coaster onto your world. I suppose people find haunted houses thrilling in the same fashion.

I sometimes wonder why I experience sleep paralysis so much. I have a naturally addictive personality—maybe I got hooked on the wrong disorder.

Or, even better, maybe my body's telling me I've been single long enough, and I need a real, regular visitor in my bed.

Sweet dreams, my friends. See you tomorrow. **JUSTIN JONES**

Information on sleep paralysis is difficult to come by. WebMD is a pretty good online resource.

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BUSINESS PROFILE

Specs Appeal

Eyeglasses are perhaps the ultimate accessory. Like a scarf or a watch, they not only can make a strong statement about your personality and style, but also have the unique ability to enhance the appearance of your face. The perfect frames are a synergy of form and function. They should be flattering, as well as comfortable, and should be in harmony with your lifestyle and goals. For a single accessory, that's a tall order.

If you already are in the market for stylish new eyeglass frames, chances are you've been to several stores, tried on frame after frame, and still had difficulty finding that perfect pair.

While other retailers tend to carry frames from the same group of designers, Specs Appeal offers something different.

Owner Ted LeClaire says, "I carry a lot of European frames that you can't get at too many places in the Twin Cities. We import them, and we also design our own."

LeClaire's unique inventory makes for a riskier business investment—requiring him to purchase the frames outright, hoping they find their way to the right owner—but it seems to have paid off. In the 17 years the store has been open, both local and out-of-town customers have sought it out. Many have become loyal customers.

Aside from the frames themselves, the other secret to Specs Appeal's success is customer service. At bigger chain stores, the burden of finding suitable frames among a veritable sea of spectacles falls solely upon the customer. However, Specs Appeal's knowledgeable staff makes the buying experience much easier. They intuitively select frames they believe would suit their client best.

The shop also is known for its ability to generate deceptively thin lenses. It offers contacts, sunglasses, readers, and eye ex-



Photo Courtesy of Specs Appeal.

ams by appointment.

With such a high priority placed on customer service, quality, and style, one might expect that frames at Specs Appeal would be prohibitively expensive. However, according to LeClaire, that is simply not the case.

As LeClaire states, "I have compared all the chain stores' prices on lenses, and then, I've undercut them a bit. My average frame is about \$300, and they go up to \$1,000."

Specs Appeal is open Monday-Friday, 10 AM-6 PM, and Saturday, 10 AM-3 PM.

HEIDI FELLNER

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President/CEO: Ted LeClaire

Number of Employees: 5

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CALENDAR

MARCH

11

Friday, March

Broke-ology. Directed by James A. Williams, this play is the story of the King family, who have survived the hardships of life with their love intact. Now, sons Malcolm and Ennis find themselves increasingly in conflict over the care of their ailing father. This portrait of an African-American family caught between the future they dreamed and the present they have is a powerfully universal American drama told with uncommon affection, honesty, and humor. Through Apr. 10. Pillsbury House Theatre, 3501 Chicago Ave. S., Mpls. [612] 825-0459. <www.pillsburyhousetheatre.org>.

12

Saturday, March

Dance? Suite! Minnesota Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO) presents its winter concert. Hundreds of years ago, multimovement works called suites were created by assembling several different types of dances. Because dances are created not just to encourage fancy footwork, but also to reflect the time, culture, history, and locale (among other things), they have become one of the most versatile and varied art forms out there, and the music used to accompany them is no exception. In this survey of various works inspired by dance, MPO will cover a multitude of different cultures, countries, and time periods. From the folksy and charming contradances composed by Beethoven to the thrilling Mexican fiesta that is Moncayo's "Huapango," we dare you to try not tapping along to these rousing works. 7:30 PM. Mar. 12. Sundin Music Hall, Hamline Univ., 1531 Hewitt Ave., St. Paul. [612] 656-5676. <www.mnphil.org>.

19

Saturday, March

Spring Fever Cabaret. This One Voice Mixed Chorus (OVMC) annual fundraiser features an all-star cast hosted by chanteuse Erin Schwab, with OVMC Musical Director Shannon Pierce conducting the fabulous cabaret band. New this year is a full three-course, plated meal, plus silent auction prizes, a wall of wine, raffle items, and more. All proceeds from this event support the OVMC mission: "Building Community and Creating Social Change by Raising Our Voices in Song!" Mar. 19. Doubletree Hotel, 1500 Park Place Blvd., St. Louis Park. [651] 298-1954. <www.ovmc.org>.

ONGOING

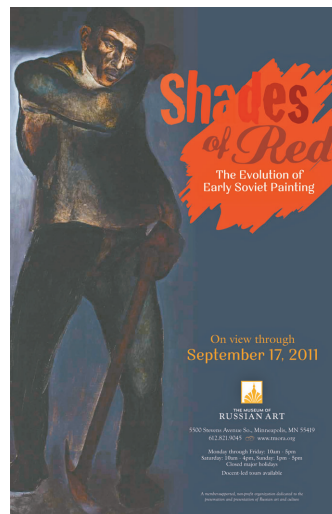
Bill W. & Dr. Bob. This play is a remarkable and humorous story set around the lives—and, more importantly, the friendship of—Bill Wilson (Phillip Callan) and Dr. Bob Smith (Terry Hempleman). Bill, a down-and-out stockbroker, and Bob, a surgeon from Ohio, were both alcoholics who, through a surprising series of events, met, and formed the world-changing friendship responsible for the creation of Alcoholics Anonymous. A universal story of the dangers of isolation, and the healing powers of good connections, the play returns with its original cast for its second run at Illusion Theater. Through Mar. 13. Illusion Theater, 528 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. [612] 339-4944. <www.illusiontheater.org>.

Dinner with the Tsars: Imperial Russian Porcelain. This exhibition brings together approximately 140 superb examples of Russian porcelain wares produced at the Imperial Porcelain Factory in St. Petersburg during the rule of the Romanovs. The beautifully-crafted, hand-painted objects present visitors with examples of inspired decorative settings and tableware used by the sovereigns and guests of the House of Romanov. Through Aug. 7. The Museum of Russian Art, 5500 Stevens Ave. S., Mpls. [612] 821-9045. <www.tmora.org>.

The Marvelous Wondrettes. This cotton candy-colored nonstop pop musical fea-

tures the iconic sounds of the '50s and '60s. In a journey back to the 1958 Springfield High School Prom, the Wondrettes—Betty Jean, Cindy Lou, Missy, and Suzy—are four young girls with hopes and dreams as big as their crinoline skirts. It's brimming with such classic hits as "Lollipop," "Dream Lover," "Lipstick On Your Collar," and many more. Throughout, we learn about their lives and loves. Through July 24. Plymouth Playhouse, 2705 Annapolis Ln. N., Plymouth. [763] 553-1600. <www.plymouthplayhouse.com>.

Nest. Table Salt Productions presents Nest, a world-premiere play by Rachael Brogan Flanery, directed by Rebecca Rizzio (Theater Unbound). Featuring a stellar cast of local talent, it gives the audience a voyeuristic peek into Katherine and her mother's attempts at building a relationship before it's too late. Included are drama; laughs; lasagna; and, of course, Christmas in July. Through Mar. 12. Lowry Lab Theater, 350 St. Peter St., St. Paul. <www.tablesaltproductions.com>.



Shades of Red. Courtesy of The Museum of Russian Art

Shades of Red: The Evolution of Early Soviet Painting. The title of The Museum of Russian Art's newest exhibition is an allegorical reference to the historical conditions prevailing in postrevolutionary Russia between 1920 and the late 1930s. The art of this period reflected a wide range of revolutionary idealism (i.e., "redness"). This exhibition of 62 paintings from a variety of private collections illustrates how the entire spectrum of socialist cultural goals was interpreted by Soviet artists of the time. It centers on a transitional period that seldom, if ever, has been addressed in

any depth. Through Sept. 17. The Museum of Russian Art, 5500 Stevens Ave. S., Mpls. [612] 821-9045. <www.tmora.org>.



Shirley Valentine. Photo by Donna Kelly

Shirley Valentine. At the age of 42, Shirley Valentine's marriage and life are in a rut. Her world is one of kitchens, cooking, and faded dreams. She longs to "drink a glass of wine in the country where grapes are grown," so when a friend invites her on holiday to Greece, she packs her bag without a second thought, ditching the drudgery of housework in hopes of adventure and love. Bain Boehlke directs Cheryl Willis, who hails from Liverpool, England, in the title role. This award-winning, one-woman show is a witty, heartfelt comedy about breaking free, living life, and starting over. Through Mar. 20. Jungle Theater, 2951 Lyndale Ave. S., Mpls. [612] 822-7063. <www.jungletheater.com>.

Song of Extinction. Directed by Peter Rothstein, this Theatre Latté Da production has its regional premiere at the Guthrie. Max, a musically-gifted high school student, is falling off the edge of the world—and his Cambodian biology teacher is the only one who has noticed. This new play by EM Lewis is about the science of life and loss; the relationships between fathers and sons; Cambodian fields; Bolivian rainforests; and redemption. It won the prestigious Steinberg New Play Award and the Los Angeles Drama Critic's Award for Outstanding New Play. Through Mar. 20. Guthrie Theater, Dowling Studio, 818 S. 2nd St., Mpls. [612] 377-2224. <www.guthrietheater.org>.

For additional calendar events, visit <www.LavenderMagazine.com>.

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Brand Loyalty

I am sitting at my desk at work, waiting for a phone call from a woman I've been courting. I have been doing so all day. She was supposed to call me last Friday, but she didn't.

"Maybe she's trapped in a car underwater, screaming out my name," I told myself this morning, full of hope that she'd escape her watery grave, and call me today. But it's almost 5 PM, and she hasn't called.

Throughout the day, I did the things you do when you're waiting for a call from a girl. I picked up the phone every five minutes to see if it was working. Then, I checked voice-mail to make sure she didn't call while I was testing the phone line. I walked away from my desk in hopes that if I played hard-to-get, she would call. I phoned my parents, and was nice to them, praying that God would reward me for being a good daughter.

Nothing worked. She didn't call.

Before we get much farther into this story, I need to tell you about my job. I work for a Brand Name Company. If I told you the name, you would recognize it. You probably would get misty-eyed, and say something like, "I grew up on (insert Brand Name of Company here)." It's the

type of company that causes people to get sentimental and weepy.

For years, I worked as an editor for the Company. One day, I asked the President of the Company if he was losing weight, and he responded, "You're promoted!" Now, my job is to secure multimillion-dollar partnerships with other Brand Name Companies.

This is not as difficult as it may seem. Brand Name Companies like to do business with other Brand Name Companies. They especially like to do business with my Company, because it is beloved by the American people.

The woman who promised to call works for a Brand Name Company that is not beloved. In fact, anyone who reads the financial pages knows that her Company is troubled, and is in no position to be jerking around a much-loved, much-admired Company like the one I work for.

She promised to call on Friday to tell me how many millions of dollars her troubled Company would give my beloved Company. But she never called.

Her Company reminds me of all the women who have rejected me over the years. Like

the Company, they also are deeply-troubled. They, too, do not call when they are supposed to. They would steal old folks pensions and dump industrial waste into the environment if they could.

At the end of the day, the President of my Company asked me if I ever got the call. I put my head into my hands, and I whimpered. He told me that he still loved me, even if the stupid woman from the troubled Company doesn't.

It was like having your Mom tell you she loves you after she learns your heart has been destroyed by a heartless girl you love more than life itself. It doesn't make me feel better.

Just then, the phone rang. It was she! She told me that her Company would not pay us one red cent. Instead, she suggested that my Company pay her Company millions of dollars.

"Yes!" I said, as my heart throbbed. "Anything! I'm just so happy you called!" **JENNIFER PARELLO**

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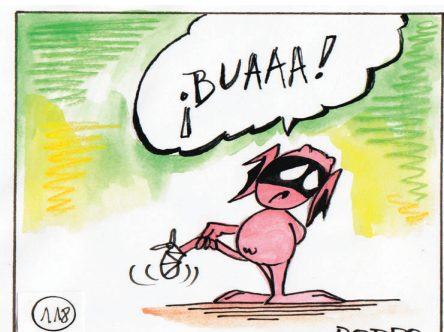
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Give Credit Where Credit Is Due



I have long been amazed—often astonished—by the brilliant ideas that pour forth from the American banking industry.

To be fair, however, I am also quite mystified by the intricate workings of the clothespin. And Velcro? Whew, that stuff just makes my head spin.

But back to bankers. For an example of their deep thinking, I noticed when I reentered college recently that I was suddenly deluged with credit card applications encouraging me to chase the “American Dream.” Well, geez, that’s just fine if the “American Dream” includes filing for Chapter Seven on graduation day.

Giving unlimited credit to students who have nothing more than, let’s say, two Popsicle sticks to rub together? Pure genius, if you ask me.

I do not get asked things very often, it should be noted. The last was: “Yes, your hat does reveal a Lady Gaga creation, madam. Now, get the hell outta my movie theater, OK?”

But this is not a new banking strategy. Back when I was in college 15 years ago, a credit card company tried to entice me by putting the well-traveled tongue of 102-year-old rock star Mick Jagger on a credit card. MasterCard and Visa, to be precise.

Now, I don’t know about you, but when I see a likeness of Jagger’s tongue, I do not think of the words “credit card.” Rather, I think of the words “biological nightmare,” “Centers for Disease Control,” and “Petri dish.”

The letter from the bank inviting me to apply for the sloppy-tongue card said, “This is anything but your basic boring credit card.

This one has all the attitude you’d expect from the world’s greatest rock ‘n’ roll band.”

Well, just what I needed while studying college algebra was the Rolling Stones attitude. I’ll be sure to use the cards when I check into a plush hotel where I lapse into a four-day coma, right after I toss condom water balloons out the window, and bust up all the furniture.

The letter went on to dredge up lyrics from early Stones songs—written during brief lulls in the Revolutionary War—such as: “Sorry, but time is *not* on your side”; and “With this card, you *can* get satisfaction.”

I remember, however, that the letter writer had failed to include this sentence: “And Ms. Daffyd, not everyone who applies will be issued a card. Because as you know, you can’t always get what you want. Unless you have \$500 million, a skull full of narcotics, or a parental signature.”

The application form that came with the letter was a prime example of why members of the banking community should never try to “get down with their bad, groovy selves.”

It asked:

- “Your real name.”
- “Where you hole up.”
- “Date of your arrival on the planet (birth date).”
- “Years at present digs.”

Sheesh.

The letter I sent back went something like this:

Dear Bank of Loons,

Let me see if I understand all this. For the

privilege of being charged interest rates that would have made Bugsy Siegel wet himself, you want to know “where I hole up”?

Let me ask you this, you wacky banking dudes: Would the answer—“in my van, with your 18-year-old-student-son, who, by the way, has been hallucinating now for three weeks”—in any way diminish my chances of being approved for these cards?

**PEACE,
JULIE “THE ECSTASY CHICK”**

PS: Any chance you could get the dude who is currently in charge of my Visa account—he goes by the name Attila—to stop calling at 4 AM about the unpaid \$11 balance?

Until I find out whether I qualify for the Mick Jagger card, I’ll continue using the one I have. It features a picture of Pee-Wee Herman.

You should see the places I can get into with this baby. Padum-pum.

Well, as you can guess, I never did get that particular card, which is all for the best, because the thought of having the wet red tongue of that guy so close to my body all day would not exactly put me in the shopping mood. It would put me in the showering mood.

Now, 15 years later, and back in college, I’m once again staring at a credit card application. But, for me, just being in college is chasing my American Dream. Besides—and consider the source here—I already have two Popsicle sticks to rub together.

Bye for now.

Kiss, kiss. **JULIE DAFFYD**

Twice Bitten

Dear Ms. Behavior:

My partner and I moved into a new building. Our neighbors, Tom and Mark, invited us to their place for a dinner party. They have a fluffy little dog that jumped up all over me. I am slightly fearful of dogs, but trying to overcome it.

When they said, "Oh, he's just trying to get your attention—he wants you to pet him," I bent down to greet the dog, who promptly bit my face. The bite drew blood.

I tried not to make a big deal of it. I just washed it off with soap, and went on with the night. But after a while, I realized that neither Tom nor Mark had apologized.

My partner and I ended up leaving before dessert, because I wanted to go home, and wash the bite with peroxide, so it wouldn't get infected.

Now, Tom and Mark act like we're pari-

ahs. They totally snub us if they see us in the elevator or the lobby. If they have their dog on a leash, they pick him up abruptly, as if I might kick him. It's totally bizarre.

My partner wants to talk to these queens, and smooth things over, mainly because they seem to be at the hub of the gay and lesbian social scene in our building.

But I refuse to kiss their asses because they're "popular." I want to tell them to drop dead.

Who's right?

—TWICE BITTEN

Dear Twice Bitten:

Owners of snippy dogs who bite often are deluded about them, and unwilling to take responsibility for the behavior of their nasty beasts. In fact, your neighbors may have convinced themselves that you bit Fluffy.

As for how to handle the current awkwardness, some middle ground definitely could be found between your partner wanting to kiss their asses, and your wanting to tell them to drop dead. It's unlikely that they'll be able or willing to "process" this event.

So, instead of your partner wasting his breath on people you don't even like, how about just trying to be cordial as you would with any other neighbors?

If they fail to respond appropriately to your gesture of being cordial, just move on. Remind yourselves that you are not, in fact, in high school.

Don't underestimate your ability to meet other neighbors and make friends, despite whether the Prom Queens of the building like you.

Dear Ms. Behavior:

After years of dating good-looking and self-

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centered men, I finally settled down with my boyfriend, because he a supremely nice guy. It's great progress for me to be with someone who is kind to me (according to my therapist).

The problem is that we've been living together now for about a year, and I really don't want to have sex...with him...at all. He's great in every way: smart, funny, kind, successful—but not sexy.

I'm 32, and my best friend, Megan, tells me I'm crazy to let this one go. She says I should have sex with him even if I don't feel like it. But she's female, so she doesn't understand fully. I'm not sure my dick will continue to cooperate.

What should I do?

—CONFUSED

Dear Confused:

Perhaps you're a little twisted, and you

only find mean and self-absorbed men to be sexy. You hardly would be alone. Our culture usually designates darkness as seductive, while earnestness and kindness are deemed to be, well, boring.

That doesn't mean you should give up on your relationship with your extra-nice boyfriend. As a wise old friend of Ms. Behavior's once said, "Smart and mean women are a dime a dozen. Smart and nice, well, that's something special." The same holds true for men.

Because your boyfriend seems to have every other quality you possibly could desire, try training him to be mean in bed, so that you finally can be attracted to him.

Tell your boyfriend about your dire need to be humiliated. Have him call you names, hide your favorite cologne, wax your balls, and beat you with a shoe. Ms. Behavior pre-

dicts that your dick will rise to the occasion.

If your therapist thinks this is a bad idea, tell her to get a life, and stop trying to fix you.

MERYL COHN

© 2011 Meryl Cohn. Address questions and correspondence to <msbehavior@aol.com>. She is the author of Do What I Say: Ms. Behavior's Guide to Gay and Lesbian Etiquette (Houghton Mifflin). Signed copies are available directly from the author.

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